

The Show Shop in the Summertime

WHAT would have happened to some of the most popular operettas of the past had they been carefully tucked away in a safe like "The Merry Widow"? It would be amusing to bet dollars to doughnuts that such has been the fate of only the English version of Lehár's work. Had Leocadia's "La Fille de Mme. Angot," Offenbach's "La Grande Duchesse," later André's "La Mascotte" been interred and their tombs carefully sealed by due process of law, would they ever have become known from one end of this country to another and would they have given pleasure to thousands of American listeners? Such is the fate of "The Merry Widow" whenever there is any project to perform that work even in such novel fashion as the Spanish singers proposed a few weeks ago.

Doubtless it will be ultimately profitable to its owners in this country to the work locked up, but the public fared better under an older and more liberal system. After the first novelty of a work had worn off in the earlier days, it was given by "repetitions" and other companies in less expensive fashion than it was originally presented. But nothing of that kind will ever happen to Lehár's masterpiece. It is under lock and key. The operetta may not have ranked with the foremost works of the Viennese school, but it is vastly superior to the rank and file of them. It has a certain historic significance. The music of Austrian operetta was not in her flower when this work was sung in Vienna. English musical comedy represented by "The Gaiety" and other less artistic specimens of that strongly national school had all but driven the work—mediocre enough to be sure for several years—of the Viennese composers from the field. When Lehár came with his first work and there was a renaissance of taste for Viennese music which ended only with the war.

William A. Brady always denied that he was the first manager to sell tickets to his theatres at a price less than the amount marked on the ticket. He called Charles Frohman the pioneer in this practice. Whoever it was started the most important business movement in the theatre since the Shuberts entered theatricals as the effective rivals of the syndicates. In this city, the business of the "cut rate" ticket has spread until there is not a theatre that does not, from time to time, come under its operation. Far reaching as its effects are here, there is no local limit to their field. Cut rate tickets are now sold in all the large cities of the country. Long runs for plays are sought and obtained in the same way they are here, although in this respect there is an important difference since a run in this city is of greater significance than it is anywhere else. But as a means of selling a play to the public for what the buyer thinks it is worth to him and not at the price set by the seller, the cut rate is as important in Chicago as it is here.

Moreover, there are mailing lists numbering as many as 50,000 persons who receive the weekly quotations of New York's plays as regularly as if they were customers of a broker's firm. It is in this way that such important branches of the theatre's support as the out of town public is taught to be wise and not pay any more than the regular New Yorker. Consequently these sophisticated visitors make their way to the theatre mart as soon as the stains of travel are removed and there

is the longing for the amusements of the metropolis—at a discount. After all, it cannot be said that the theatre is not on a substantial basis when its tickets are disposed of in this way. There must be bargain days in every business. It is the acumen of the promoters of this new enterprise in discovering that there is a market price at which such objects may be disposed of profitably even if it be less than what the dealer demands. He is ultimately willing enough to close out at a profit although that profit is less than he expected.

THE STADIUM CONCERTS.

The fifth week of the symphony orchestra concerts at the Lewisohn Stadium, 18th street and Amsterdam avenue, beginning Monday night, will include selections new to the programmes arranged there by Arnold Volpe, the conductor, with repetitions from earlier weeks. Two guest conductors are announced to conduct their own compositions, Elliot Schenck on Wednesday and James P. Dunn on Friday night.

Monday, symphony night, Marie Louise Wagner will be heard in the soprano aria from Massenet's "Le Cid," the orchestral selections including the "Blue" which had their origin in this street in its palmy days, respectively. Operatic selections will prevail for the orchestra as usual on Tuesdays, including the overture to Strauss's "The Bat," the "Aida" fantasia, "Carmen" suite No. 2, two preludes from "Lohengrin" and Delibes' ballet suite "Sylvia."

Tuesday night Ruth Miller, soprano, and Craig Campbell, tenor, will sing the polonaises from "Mignon" and the tenor aria from "Romeo and Juliet" respectively. Operatic selections will prevail for the orchestra as usual on Tuesdays, including the overture to Strauss's "The Bat," the "Aida" fantasia, "Carmen" suite No. 2, two preludes from "Lohengrin" and Delibes' ballet suite "Sylvia."

Wednesday night's miscellaneous programme will introduce Schenck's Indian overture "The Arrow Maker," conducted by himself, with Grieg, Tchaikowsky, Liszt, Jarnesfeldt, Dvorak and others represented, and the Stadium Quartet, including Idelle Patterson, Ernest Davis, Lillian Eubank and Earle Tuckerman, as the vocalists.

The second symphony night, Thursday, brings Victoria Boshko to the piano, with Grieg's Concerto in A minor, and Ilya Schkolnik, violinist, in Saint-Saens' "Le Deluge," with the Bach-Albert prelude, choral and fugue, Haydn's Symphony No. 13, G. major, and "L'Apprenti Sorcier," by Dukas.

Friday night Elias Breckin, violinist, in the first movement of Tchaikowsky's Concerto, and U. S. Kerr, basso, in "Calumnia," from the "Barber of Seville," and Compose Dunn will conduct the first performance of his new intermezzo. Other orchestra numbers are selected from the operas of Weber, Verdi, Gounod, Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Margaret Matzenauer is the soloist for Saturday night's popular programme, singing arias from "Le Prophete" and "Samson and Delilah." The following Sunday night is to have a miscellaneous programme, with Nevada Van Der Veer and Reed Miller as soloists.

MISS GRAY'S BLUE.

JUST how elevating the influence of jazz has been on the art of the drama may be understood from the success of Gilda Gray, the star of the Shubert "Gaieties of 1915." Miss Gray to introduce her virtuosity in the shimmy dance, which is a name



POPPY MORTON, BILLY WAGNER, AND JEAN DANJOU IN "THE SHUBERT GAIETIES OF 1915"

that the present writer hesitated to put into print only a few months ago but now unhesitatingly uses, so rapidly may one become demoralized, sings a song called "The Beale Street Blues," composed by W. C. Handy. Beale street was in New Orleans. It has disappeared so far as it stood for the spirit of this song. The community is not considered any the worse for the loss of the residents of this thoroughfare. Indeed their disappearance was regarded as an advance in the efforts of social reformers. The "blue" which had their origin in this street in its palmy days, however, are regarded as the most typical of this class of song.

Listeners have sometimes thought that a blue must be founded on a negro spiritual. It has the musical character as well as the reflective nature of some of the negro hymns. Walter Kingsley says the missionaries did sing these hymns to the inhabitants of Beale and similar streets in the South in their efforts to change the ways of life that maintained there. Perhaps this was not accomplished so often as the good men and women hoped. But the hymn made its effect. It remained in the knowledge of the negroes who had heard it shot at their ears in the attempt to make them better.

So the "blue" is the song of their aspirations and desires, good or evil, and it assumes the form and sometimes the tune of the hymn, since that appears to Beale street the only spiritual form of expression that ever came into its knowledge. The blue may be about an altogether unmentionable aspiration. It may on the other hand be expressive of a temporary pique. Sometimes the words of the missionaries and the desires of the singer become most incongruously blended, as in Miss Gray's song. As the "blue," which must inevitably be synopsized in tune and more or less affected by the rubato of jazz, comes to the public now, it mingles the voice of the dweller in the depths of Beale street with the hoarse calls of the missionary to higher things. This is Miss Gray's song, which is published by the Pace & Handy Music Company:

I have seen all the lights of gay Broadway.
On Market Street down to "Prisco Bay."
I have strolled the Prado, I have gambled on the horse.
I have seen pretty brown, beautiful gowns, tallorned and hand me down.
I have seen honest men, pickpockets skilled.
The place never closes until somebody gets killed.
I'd rather be here than any place I know.
For it's going to take a sergeant to make me go.
I have been in jail with my face to the wall.
And a great big tall man is the cause of it all.
The graveyard is a nasty old place.
They lay you on your back and throw dirt in your face.
(Get over, dirty)
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.
If my singing don't get you, my shimmy must.
(Step on it, boys).

A PETTICOAT PARODIST.

IT'S not every theatrical performer who can claim the distinction of having the backing of the Church in his designs upon the stage as the chief means of cultivating his soul. Such a claim can be made by James Watts, who is at present cavorting through the "Greenwich Village Follies" and amusing audiences with his travesties of female operatic stars and agonized Russian ballet dancers.

When James was a young lad in Australia, where his father was an architect, it was intended that the boy, the youngest of a family of four boys and four girls, should follow his father's profession and draw large houses and large checks. But young Watts from early childhood had nursed ambitions of drawing another kind of houses behind the footlights—and possibly even larger checks.

So after leaving the grammar school at Melbourne fifteen years ago he asked the consent of his mother—his father being dead—to carry the name of Watts as close to that of Henry Irving as he wished. His mother opposed his ambition and the other members of his family, in the time honored way of families, told him in the friend-

liest spirit that he was crazy to go on the stage, and they were surprised at a Watts for developing such a streak of insanity. But as James persisted his mother sent to the Episcopal minister of their parish for advice on how to restore her son's reason.

"Let him go," said the reverend gentleman's counsel, almost depriving Mrs. Watts for the moment of her reason.

"He'll soon come back if he doesn't like it. And if he is fitted for it, he'll be just as well off."

Consequently by direct clerical injunction we have to-day James Watts, an extravaganza in skirts, "Hello Ragtime," in which Ethel Levey was appearing, and Watts, who acknowledges that his stage career in Australia hadn't laid him liable to the jealousy of even a stock company sourette, was almost stunned at the warm reception that the public accorded his first appearance as a decoy young thing who couldn't control her legs.

He decided the act must be good. He continued in it at London theatres, and later in the same year went to Berlin, where he was rebuffed at the Winter Garden and had the doubtful distinction of appearing before the Crown Prince when it was the general assumption that Frederick Wilhelm was somebody. He says the "White Rabbit" frequented the theatre and

his mother his first pay check, just to show her that this big money contradicted her dire warning that stage fame was cheap—and so were salaries. Enrolling in the J. C. Williamson organization, he played throughout Australia for three years, filling juvenile leads and other tenor roles in "The Runaway Girl," "Florodora," "The Belle of New York" and other celebrated New York musical comedies that are still fighting for survival in exile.

His work in these operettas set his ambition veering in another direction—he would live up grand opera with his voice. In fact, though, no one would guess it from his screams in the "Faust" burlesque scene in the "Greenwich Village Follies." Watts still cherishes the hope of "giving them a surprise" in grand opera by showing them that a slither corsage may cover a true manly voice.

To further his aim he studied operatic roles in the musical conservatory in Melbourne now conducted under the auspices of Mme. Melba, gave further strict attention to his vocal chords in Italy, and in 1912 arrived in London to flood the English market with his notes. He took up courses in the ballet school and in the operatic training establishment of Emma Nevada, the American diva, and though it seems a far cry now, his attendance at Mme. Nevada's school led straight to his career of fawning about in petticoats.

For Mme. Nevada was fond of get-

ting up more or less informal entertainments for her artistic friends in London, and at these Watts gave caricatures of feminine performers, considering them, as he says, "a lot of rot," but being perfectly willing to oblige. He happened to strike the note one night of Dr. Palmer, Mme. Nevada's husband, and the latter said to him afterward in astonishment:

"For goodness sake, why do you want to study seriously? Why don't you go on the stage like that and make some real money?"

Accordingly his antics were engaged for the London Coliseum revue, "Hello Ragtime," in which Ethel Levey was appearing, and Watts, who acknowledges that his stage career in Australia hadn't laid him liable to the jealousy of even a stock company sourette, was almost stunned at the warm reception that the public accorded his first appearance as a decoy young thing who couldn't control her legs.

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spread the well known slimmer over his countenance, and the management congratulated Watts that he was making a hit with His Highness—the hit not being listed now among Watts's assets.

Berlin audiences are found to be apparently the last things created in the way of good taste. Even at the Winter Garden, their high class house, the patrons were open to suggestion, so to speak. The manager, he says, urged him to be as broad as he could and the grateful public would reward him. He escaped from Berlin and this sort of Kultur and went to Brussels, escaping from there in the middle of July, 1914, just before this Kultur seemed likely to overwhelm him again.

After playing in England the long arm of the Shuberts grasped him. They brought him to this country two years ago, but instead of appearing in one of their productions he entered vaudeville and romped around the Keith and Orpheum circuits until Murray Anderson, producer of the "Greenwich Village Follies" became fascinated by his wobble. Mr. Anderson decided that here was a man simply crying for a part in one of his productions, and when Watts strayed into New York recently on the trail of a nice, cool place to spend a summer's vacation the manager overcame his objections to working with humidity also on the job and convinced the actor that the Greenwich Village Theatre was the ideal spot for his vacation.

"No, I have no intention of ever playing serious roles or even straight comedy parts," said Watts the other night in the eagle's eyrie on top of the theatre that he uses for a dressing room. "Whenever I see anything it's the wildly hilarious side of it that strikes me, and I couldn't get over it sufficiently to play any other kind of performance."

"In burlesquing the Russian dancers," he explained, "I'm not really caricaturing Anna Pavlova and Michael Mordkin, for they're fine artists, and I don't really see anything funny in them myself. But I burlesque the horde of freaks who followed them in the Russian dance craze and who thought they were Pavlova and Mordkin, their only mistake being that they couldn't see themselves."

For all his Irish-Australian descent and his rather marked English accent Watts confesses that he likes America and believes he'll stay here, except perhaps for an occasional call on a couple of brothers in Australia, in particular and the Antipodes in general.

NEGRO THEATRES UNITE.

THE formation of a circuit of colored theatres, with Lester A. Walton as general manager, has just been completed, and the merger is generally regarded as the most important and far reaching step ever taken in the history of theatricals.



VIOLET MARCELLUS IN "THE GREENWICH VILLAGE FOLLIES"

Langford's luck they called it—and with reason. Edward Langford, now prominent in the cast of "At 9:15," Owen Davis's new melodrama of mystery, marriage and murder at the Playhouse, was, until mustered out some months ago, first sergeant of Company K of the old Seventh Regiment. Langford was in khaki two years, in France eleven months, and very much in the thick of things from last July until armistice day.

At Busigny one mean morning last October he was one of eleven quartered in a dugout. Orders had been given and preparation made to go over the parapet at 2:30. At twenty past 2 nine men, including Langford, were inside the dugout and two out. Then a German shell hit the dugout, killed four men, wounded six and left Langford unscathed. He was buried deep and to that attributes his escape. No time was lost in digging him out, and at 8 o'clock, with the balance of Company K, he went over and after Fritz. His luck continued and he came back practically without a scratch.

It continued here as well as in France, for very shortly after he was mustered out and switched from khaki to "civ." William A. Brady engaged him for his present role in "At 9:15." And in these days when realism rules in the theatre it may not be amiss to record the fact that Jim Everett, the character personated by Mr. Langford in the Davis melodrama, is a man who saw service overseas, and who like Langford was mustered out before the story of the play opens.

When a syndicate headed by E. C. Brown, the colored banker of Philadelphia and Norfolk, took over the lease of the Lafayette Theatre, at 131st street and Seventh avenue, New York, and also assumed all outstanding contracts which the Quality Amusement Corporation had made with the Lafayette Players, the best known dramatic organization among colored people in the country.

In Philadelphia a 1,600 seat house, to be known as the Dunbar, is being built at Broad and Lombard streets, just two blocks from the Shubert Theatre, by a company of which E. C. Brown is president, Lester A. Walton vice-president and Andrew F. Stevens secretary and treasurer. The ground, building and equipment will cost \$375,000.

The promoters plan to organize and manage dramatic and musical companies for these colored houses aside from keeping in the field the four companies of Lafayette Players now working. The opening of a school of dramatic art in New York for young colored men and women has been decided upon, and a booking office to supply colored theatres throughout the country with colored acts is planned.

WALTER WANGER, after eighteen months air service with the A. E. F. in France and Italy, returned last week to Broadway theatricals, and according to an announcement issued from his offices yesterday afternoon he has already resumed those managerial activities which he somewhat precipitately abandoned immediately upon America's entry into the war.

On July 4, the announcement states, Mr. Wanger formally took possession of the Fulton Theatre, which he has leased from Oliver D. Bailey for two months, and where with Jack H. Hines as business manager he has established general headquarters for his various enterprises.

On the same day, July 4, Mr. Wanger also entered into an agreement with the New York Theatre Guild whereby its highly successful production of "John Ferguson" was transferred to his exclusive management, arrangements having already been made for the removal of the production from the Garrick to the Fulton Theatre on the following Monday night and of keeping it there indefinitely.

Mr. Wanger, whose pioneer dramatic

Jess Willard felt after that fatal third round in Toledo," said Lew Fields in his dressing room at the Shubert Theatre the other night, "but if he felt any worse than I do right now, Heaven help him," and the star of "A Lonely Romeo" rubbed his shoulders and gave a loud "Ough!"

Mr. Fields had just come off the stage after the second act of the musical play, and had turned half a dozen handkerchiefs, to the great delight of the audience, which seldom sees such things outside of motion pictures. It is getting on his nerves—he admits it.

"I sort of wished this thing on myself," he said, "and I have apparently created a Frankenstein that I cannot escape. You see, on the opening night of 'A Lonely Romeo' the second act ends with a big dancing number, in which participate such whirlwind dancers as Jessie Brown, Willie Solar and Anna Clara. The audience was enthusiastic, and it seemed to me to be necessary to have the star do something besides stand there and bow and grin like a Cheshire cat. By inspiration—or ill luck, whatever you may want to call it—and carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, I leaped from my position at the left of the stage and turned a couple of handkerchiefs. I had not done any such thing since I was a boy on the East Side. The audience roared, I presume at seeing a man of my age do such a boyish thing, so I gave another series of leaps, and, lo and behold! it was a riot. Now, darn it all, I have to do it every performance. Once I tried to cut it out, and some man down front, hollered out: 'Come on, Lew; do that handkerchief, and no stalling!' so we had to raise the curtain, and I had to go through it. But my shoulders ache all the time. I don't believe in liniments, but I do have a good massage after each performance. I wish I could cut it out, for I am a trifle over 50 and a grandfather, but the dear public apparently will not stand for any reneging, so it looks as if I would have to turn handkerchiefs for the balance of the run of the show."

This is the preface written by John Drinkwater to his play "Abraham Lincoln" for the English edition published by Sidgwick & Jackson. It will also appear in the American edition to be published by Houghton Mifflin Company. The play, which has been running in London since February, will



OLIVE WYNHAM AND GEORGIA HALL IN "A VOICE IN THE DARK"

production, it will be remembered, was the presentation of Mme. Nazimova in Henry Austin Adams's drama "Ception Shoals" in the winter of 1917, now prominently in the cast of "At 9:15."

The first of these will be a comedy drama of American life by Maria Thompson Davies entitled "The Purple Slipper," which goes into rehearsal next week and is scheduled for Broadway presentation in the early fall.

"The Purple Slipper" will be followed by the production in the first or second week of October of a drama of Parisian life, the same being an adaptation from the French and offered to American theatregoers under the interesting title of "Profane Love."

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SUMMER RESORTS.

LUNA—Last week marked the attendance record here with over half a million visitors, ascribed to the fact that on one day thousands poured into the park to watch William Allen White, the great catch as catch can thought expert of Emporia, Kansas, eat fried chicken and waffles at Shady's Balconettes.

STEELCHASE—The rainy season last week drove scores to take refuge in the outdoor pool here. The theatre in which the public form the stock company continues its unparalleled run.

PALISADES—Any one desirous of returning to nature during the hot spell can do so here in the inland sea, on the thrilling rides or along the Midway.



FRANK FAY AND NANCY FAIR IN "OH, WHAT A GIRL"